

Animal Helpers



Pets are important to many people. Millions of families have pet dogs and cats. Some families have other kinds

of pets, like hamsters, lizards, bunnies, and birds, too.

But some animals do more than just keep us company and make us laugh. We call these animals **service animals** and they do work that helps people who are lost or injured. Service animals also help people who have disabilities. These animals help people with special learning needs or people who can't see or hear. Just like some kids have a teacher's aide who helps them in the classroom, some people have animals that help them in the community.

Rescue Dogs

Rescue dogs use their sense of smell to track missing people in the woods, or find them under snow in an avalanche or under rubble after an earthquake. On September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center towers collapsed, rescue dogs helped search for survivors.

Guide Dogs

Guide dogs are special helper dogs that help blind people walk safely on busy sidewalks and know when cars are stopped so they can cross streets. They let deaf people know that the phone is ringing or someone is at the door. Dogs can be taught to bring things to people in wheelchairs or pick things up that they drop on the floor. Dogs train for a long time to become guide dogs.



Mini Horses

Some deaf or blind people are starting to use small horses as guide animals. These horses are the size of a Golden Retriever dog. They are very steady on their feet and can see very well in the dark. And they don't get tired very easily.

Mini guide horses wear harnesses like guide dogs. This helps the horse lead the person in the right direction safely. Like guide dogs, mini horses can go everywhere their people go—in stores and restaurants, on buses and planes. And the best part is that they often live a long time—as much as 35 years!



Therapy Horses

Riding horses also helps people with disabilities feel healthy. The motion of the horses helps people feel calm and helps their bodies move better. Stables that have special horses have opened in many communities. People who have special learning needs or who use a wheelchair can go to these stables to ride a very calm horse. A trainer leads the horse while helpers stand on each side of them to make sure they don't fall off.

Training animals to help people takes time and patience. But service animals seem to love their work and people appreciate their help!